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Current Class: [REDACTED]  
Current Handling: [REDACTED]  
Document Number: 1979BUENOS00082

Page: 1

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PAGE 01 BUENOS 00082 01 OF 02 042008Z  
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INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 HA-02 INR-05 CIAE-00 NSAE-00  
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R 041905Z JAN 79  
FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8929

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)  
U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS  
Margaret P. Griefeld, Director  
☒ Release ☐ Excise ☐ Deny  
Exemption(s):  
Declassify: ☐ In Part ☒ In Full  
( ) Classify as ☐ ( ) Extend as ☐ ( ) Downgrade to  
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SECTION 1 OF 2 BUENOS AIRES 0082

E.O. 12065: XDS-1 1/2/99 (CASTRO, RAUL) OR-M  
TAGS: SHUM AR  
SUBJ: REHABILITATION PROGRAMS FOR POLITICAL PRISONERS

1. ENTIRE TEXT [REDACTED]

2. SUMMARY: THE EMBASSY HAS RECENTLY LEARNED DETAILS OF REHABILITATION PROGRAMS FOR POLITICAL PRISONERS RUN BY THE ARGENTINE ARMY AND NAVY. THE EXISTENCE OF SUCH A PROGRAM WAS PUBLICLY ANNOUNCED IN MID-1978 WHEN SELECTED JOURNALISTS WERE HELICOPTERED TO A REHABILITATION FACILITY. THE INFORMATION NOW AVAILABLE INDICATES THAT BOTH POLITICAL RE-EDUCATION PROGRAMS APPEAR TO BE SMALL IN SIZE AND EXPERIMENTAL IN NATURE. END SUMMARY.

3. NAVY MECHANICAL SCHOOL REHABILITATION PROGRAM - THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION ON THE NAVY'S PROGRAM WAS PROVIDED BY CATHOLIC CHURCH AND FRENCH EMBASSY SOURCES (STRICTLY PROTECT - XDS-1): THE ARGENTINE NAVY HAS RUN A SMALL REHABILITATION PROGRAM AT THE NAVY MECHANICAL SCHOOL FOR 80 "SUBVERSIVES." THESE RETRAINEES WERE DIVIDED INTO 6- OR 7-MAN SQUADS, EACH LED BY A NAVY LIEUTENANT COMMANDER. THE RETRAINEES HAVE UNDERGONE

PAGE 02 BUENOS 00082 01 OF 02 042008Z

PSYCHOLOGICAL RE-EDUCATION, CONDUCTED BY TRAINED PSYCHOLOGISTS AND SOCIOLOGISTS. REPORTEDLY, THE

Current Class: [REDACTED]

Page: 1

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

Current Class: [REDACTED]  
Current Handling: [REDACTED]  
Document Number: 1979BUENOS00082

Page: 2

Channel: n/a

INDIVIDUALS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS FAMILY, RELIGION AND NATIONAL OBJECTIVES WERE "STRENGTHENED" TO REPLACE THEIR PREVIOUS POLITICAL-IDEOLOGICAL PERSONALITY SUPPORT SYSTEMS.

4. THE RETRAINEES WERE SELECTED FOR THEIR INTELLIGENCE AND DEMONSTRATED SKILLS FROM AMONG THE "RECUPERABLES" (I.E. NON-TERRORISTS) INTERROGATED AT THE NAVY MECHANICAL SCHOOL. THE RETRAINEES THEN SERVED AS TRUSTEES AT THE MECHANICAL SCHOOL'S DETENTION AND INTERROGATION FACILITIES. WE HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT THE MOST TALENTED AMONG THEM WERE ORGANIZED INTO A GROUP TO WRITE SPEECHES AND MAGAZINE ARTICLES FOR ATTRIBUTION TO ADMIRAL MASSERA.

5. THE NAVY RETRAINEES WERE ALLOWED TO TELEPHONE THEIR FAMILIES, AND SEVERAL TIMES A YEAR THEIR SQUAD COMMANDERS TOOK THEM TO THEIR HOMES FOR FAMILY VISITS. SOME WERE ALLOWED TO SPEND WEEKENDS WITH THEIR FAMILIES.

6. ACCORDING TO OUR FRENCH EMBASSY SOURCE, THE NAVY'S BEST KNOWN RETRAINEE WAS HORACIO DOMINGO MAGGIO, WHO IN APRIL OF 1978 ISSUED A DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE MECHANICAL SCHOOL DETENTION FACILITY THROUGH LETTERS TO SEVERAL PRESS AGENCIES AND EMBASSIES. THE LETTERS WERE "PUBLISHED" AND DISTRIBUTED BY AN APPARATUS WE BELIEVE HAS ITS ROOTS IN THE MONTONEROS. MAGGIO APPARENTLY ESCAPED DURING A WEEKEND FAMILY MEETING, ALTHOUGH TO OBSCURE THIS FACT HE CLAIMED TO HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ESCAPE DURING A TRANSFER BETWEEN PRISONS.

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PAGE 03 BUENOS 00082 01 OF 02 042008Z

THE SAME SOURCE STATES THAT MAGGIO HAS SINCE BEEN CAPTURED AND KILLED BY NAVY INTELLIGENCE. INTERESTINGLY, MAGGIO'S WIFE WROTE LAST OCTOBER TO SEVERAL OF THOSE WHO HAD RECEIVED HIS LETTERS ORIGINALLY, STATING THAT HE SUDDENLY HAD DISAPPEARED.

7. BOTH SOURCES REPORT THAT THE NAVY IS CLOSING THE NAVY MECHANICAL SCHOOL DETENTION FACILITY. (NOTE: THESE REPORTS WERE GIVEN SUBSTANCE BY NAVY DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL ADMIRAL LUCHETTA, WHO RECENTLY TOLD EMBOFFS THAT THE NAVY WOULD INSIST THAT THE INTER-AMERICAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION VISIT THE NAVY'S

Current Class: [REDACTED]

Page: 2

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

Current Class: [REDACTED]  
Current Handling: [REDACTED]  
Document Number: 1979BUENOS00082

Page: 3

Channel: n/a

MECHANICAL SCHOOL TO DISPROVE REPORTS OF DETENTION AND INTERROGATION FACILITIES BEING LOCATED THERE. LUCHETTA CITED SPECIFICALLY ALLEGATIONS PUBLISHED IN LE MONDE AND THE SPANISH MAGAZINE, CAMBIO-16.

8. THE FUTURE OF THE RETRAINEES WAS REPORTED TO HAVE PROVOKED A SERIOUS DEBATE WITHIN THE NAVY. ONE FACTION URGED THAT THE INDIVIDUALS BE RETRAINED TO WORK FOR THE NAVY OR IN THE MASSERA POLITICAL CAMPAIGN. THE WINNING FACTION ARGUED THAT THE RETRAINEES BE RETURNED TO ARGENTINE SOCIETY AT LARGE.

9. ARMY RETRAINING FACILITY -----  
THIS EMBASSY AND THE FRG EMBASSY HAVE RECEIVED REPORTS REGARDING THE REHABILITATION BY THE ARMY OF A COUPLE IN THEIR TWENTIES WHO WERE FORMERLY PERONIST UNION ACTIVISTS IN A MAJOR ARGENTINE BANK. ACCORDING TO INFORMATION PROVIDED BY THE MANJ'S MOTHER, BOTH FAMILIES RECEIVE REGULAR COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE COUPLE VIA PHONE CALLS AND LETTERS. IN ADDITION, ON ONE OCCASION THE MOTHER REPORTED THAT A GUARD FROM THE REHABILITATION FACILITY VISITED THE GIRL'S FAMILY HOME TO PICK UP SPECIAL FOODS, CIGARETTES, CIGARS AND SHOES FOR THE COUPLE. THE GUARD CHATTED  
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PAGE 04 BUENOS 00082 01 OF 02 042008Z

AMICABLY WITH THE FAMILY FOR HALF AN HOUR OVER COFFEE BEFORE LEAVING.

10. FROM THE CONTACTS AND THE GUARD'S COMMENTS THE FAMILIES HAVE DEDUCED THE FOLLOWING: THE COUPLE IS BEING HELD IN AN ARMY RUN FACILITY NEAR EZEIZA AIRPORT. THE RETRAINING PROGRAM IS CONDUCTED BY A TEAM OF PSYCHOLOGISTS AND SOCIOLOGISTS. THE COUPLE IS WELL CARED FOR. THEY HAVE PLENTY OF FOOD. THERE IS HEAT IN THE WINTER. THE FACILITY HAS TELEVISION.  
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PAGE 01 BUENOS 00082 02 OF 02 042011Z  
ACTION ARA-10

Current Class: [REDACTED]

Page: 3

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

Current Class: [REDACTED]  
Current Handling: [REDACTED]  
Document Number: 1979BUENOS00082

Page: 4

Channel: n/a

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 HA-02 INR-05 CIAE-00 NSAE-00  
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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8930

[REDACTED] SECTION 2 OF 2 BUENOS AIRES 0082

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THE RETRAINEES WIDELY CELEBRATED WHEN ARGENTINA WON THE WORLD CUP FINAL. THERE ARE CARPENTRY SHOPS AND A PHOTO LAB. ARTS AND CRAFTS ARE ENCOURAGED. THE GUARD BROUGHT A DOLL AND SOME CROCHETED ITEMS MADE BY THE WOMAN FOR HER BABY, PLUS A DETAILED COLORED PENCIL PICTURE MADE BY ANOTHER PRISONER.

11. THE COUPLE'S PHONE CONVERSATIONS AND LETTERS WITH THEIR FAMILIES HAVE FOCUSED ON THE FAMILY. THE COUPLE HAS REPEATEDLY ACKNOWLEDGED THEIR MISTAKES OF THE PAST AND HAVE VOWED NOT TO COMMIT THEM AGAIN. THE COUPLE ALWAYS EMPHASIZED THEIR DESIRE TO DEDICATE THEIR FUTURE LIVES TO THEIR FAMILIES AND THEIR INFANT SON, WHO IS STAYING WITH THE MATERHAL GRANDMOTHER.

12. THE GUARD DURING HIS VISIT STATED THAT THE AUTHORITIES TRY TO PUT "RECUPERABLES" INTO RETRAINING PROGRAMS INSTEAD OF EXECUTIVE (PEN) DETENTION TO AVOID THE LONG DELAYS OF THE ARGENTINE JUDICIAL SYSTEM (SIC). THE GUARD STATED THAT THE RETRAINING PROGRAM GENERALLY LASTS FROM A YEAR AND A HALF TO TWO YEARS AS THE AUTHORITIES WANT TO INSURE THAT THE RETRAINEES ARE FIRM IN THEIR NEW BELIEFS AND WISH

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PAGE 02 BUENOS 00082 02 OF 02 042011Z

TO PREVENT "RELAPSES."

13. EMBASSY COMMENT: THESE REPORTS APPEAR CREDIBLE. IN ADDITION TO THESE TWO FACILITIES, THE EMBASSY HAS INFORMATION FROM MILITARY SOURCES REGARDING SECRET RETRAINING FACILITIES IN SOUTHERN ARGENTINA FOR MONTONERO AND ERP INFORMANTS. IN MID-1978 A GROUP OF CAREFULLY SELECTED JOURNALISTS WERE ALLOWED TO

Current Class: [REDACTED]

Page: 4

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

Current Class: [REDACTED]  
Current Handling: [REDACTED]  
Document Number: 1979BUENOS00082

Page: 5

Channel: n/a

VISIT A RURAL REHABILITATION FACILITY LOCATED WITHIN AN HOUR'S HELICOPTER RIDE FROM BUENOS AIRES. ONLY TWO COUPLES WERE HOUSED IN THE LARGE, WELL APPOINTED FACILITY.

14. ALTHOUGH WE DO NOT HAVE ENOUGH INFORMATION TO ESTIMATE THE NUMBER OF PRISONERS INVOLVED IN THE VARIOUS REHABILITATION PROGRAMS, WE BELIEVE THE NUMBER TO BE SMALL, PERHAPS SEVERAL HUNDRED AT THE OUTSIDE. END COMMENT.  
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Current Class: [REDACTED]

Page: 5

UNCLASSIFIED